

**210 SIDNEY AND BEATRICE
WEBB**

as a sort of Golden Era of peace, progress and prosperity

How short are memories¹ Anyone alive then who now

makes the effort to reconstruct that period in its detail

will discover that there comes back to him an atmosphere

cumulatively hectic, uneasy, and so little happy that

even the least sensitive were aware of some deep disorder

in the frame of things The externals of prosperity were

there, inasmuch as between 1912 and 1914 trade was

good and business flourishing, but, politically and indus-

trially, there was a far-reaching sense of insecurity and

unrest, while the colour of thought and feeling was shot

with angry hues of violence and the belief in force The

current philosophy of the day was re-acting strongly against

reason, and installing instinct in its place instinct which

must not be thwarted or even controlled Action was

extolled above thought Bergson and Coue were preparing

the way for Freud and Sorel

The political scene was dominated by militancy, both

in the women's struggle for emancipation, and in the

armed resistance to Home Rule preparing in North-East

Ulster, and while the Asquith Government did carry

out a savage, if ineffective, repression of the women's

efforts, leading statesmen, high Army chiefs, and all the

best drawing-rooms in London applauded the appeal to

the sword in Ireland Industrially, 1911 to 1914 was

an epoch of strikes, actual and threatened, such as had

not been known for decades and of an

apparent conversion of the British Trade Union movement to the technique of "direct action"⁵ There were strikes, between 1911 and 1913, of railwaymen, miners, transport workers, building trades workers, engineers, and shipbuilders labour disputes, which totalled under four hundred in 1908, rose to over nine hundred in 1913 and in the first half of 1914 were declared at the rate of something like one hundred and fifty a month in the late summer of that